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BOSTON UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL

Thesis

THE INFLUENCE OF THE CHURCH ON THE THEATRE IN SPAIN

Submitted by

Dorothy M. Ellis

(A.B.,Radcliffe, 1918)

In partial fulfilment of requirements for

the degree of Master of Arts

1922

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OUTLINE

I. Beginnings of Drama in the Church

1. Its foundations laid in ritual.

2. Clergy overthrow the ancient theatre.

3. The earliest auto appears in the twelfth century.

II. Development of the Drama

1. Alfonso X seeks to check abuses which have crept in.

2. "La Celestina" appears about 1500 and introduces contemporary figures into Spanish stagecraft.

3. Encina becomes the founder of the secular theatre.

4. Gil Vicente improves on the autos and on the work of Encina.

III. Great Religious Plays

1. "Autos Sacramentales"

a. Popularity increases through fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

b. Movement culminates in autos of Calderon.

2. "Comedias Divinas"

a. Stage acts as medium for expressing religious fervor.

b. Religious enthusiasm culminates in national drama of Lope de Vega.

IV. Results of Relationship of Church to Drama

1. Drama serves as an instrument for keeping faith before people.

2. Desire to amuse audience leads to introduction of non-religious subjects.

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THE INFLUENCE OF THE CHURCH ON THE THEATRE IN SPAIN

In no country has religious drama had so rich, so long and so brilliant a development as it has had in Spain. The Catholic Church in this "most Catholic country in the world" early recognized the advantages of the theatre as a means of vividly impressing upon the soul, by words and example, the most essential articles of faith. To this end she originated, fostered and patronized this agency until it became a national institution.

As in England, the beginnings of the drama were found in the ritual of the Church, for here, particularly in the Catholic Church, are ceremonies or rites, performed by the priest in the celebration of the Mass, which have decided theatrical suggestions. But in Spain the Church for many years dominated the people far more powerfully than it did in England, so that its influence was naturally felt more. Before the influence of the Church could be brought to bear upon the theatre it was necessary to overthrow any remains of the ancient Greek and Roman theatre. The accomplishment of this overthrow necessitated a long struggle, and the issuance of the Tertullian and Augustinian indictments, but the clergy at the time felt that the existing theatre was so essentially mythological that it was offensive to Christians and therefore, because of its tone, deserving of the fate it suffered.

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> "A love for theatrical exhibitions,however,survived the extinction of these poor remains of the classical drama; and the priesthood,careful neither to make itself needlessly odious,nor to neglect any suitable method of increasing its own influence,seems early to have been willing to provide a substitute for the popular amusement it had destroyed." Ticknor: History of Spanish Literature. vol.1,chap.Xlll,p.232.

Consequently,as early as the twelfth century we find evidence of the drama as a form of Spanish literature in the little mystery play,"Misterio" or "Auto de los Reyes Magos." This is a very simple piece intended for performance on the Feast of the Epiphany. It is a dramatic representation of the liturgy,an offshoot of the liturgy of the Benedictines of Cluny,and in all probability brought into Spain by French monks in the eleventh or twelfth century. However, the Spanish version is a great improvement upon the French rendering,both in plot and in character delineation.

The Earliest Auto

In this auto the three Magi appear,first separately, then together. They have seen the star of Bethlehem; two of them wish to observe it another night,while the third wishes to observe it for three consecutive nights. While on their way to Bethlehem they confide the nature of their mission to Herod,whom they encounter on the way,and he takes

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counsel with his soothsayers to determine whether the story told by the Magi is worthy of belief. The passage between Herod and his counsellors is full of intensity and passion. Throughout the play the dramatic action is elaborated,the dialogue quickened,and scenes joined together logically,so that the whole represents a marked improvement over the earlier French version.

There were doubtless other autos written on this same subject and on other religious themes,but this one is the sole survivor which shows us that a religious drama did exist in the twelfth century. This "Auto de los Reyes Magos" becomes the foundation of the Spanish theatre. It corresponds to the mystères and miracles of France,the cycles of England,in York and Coventry,and the sacre rappresentazioni of Italy. It is unfortunate that there should exist no documentary evidence of other plays of this character contemporary with the "Auto de los Reyes Magos",and we hear little more of the drama in Spain until the fifteenth century.

Censorship in 1260

However,we have proof that these simple commentaries on the liturgy were gradually adulterated with buffoonery,which frequently brought down the censure of the clergy. In the famous code of laws,the "Siete Partidas",of Alfonso X of Castile,prepared about 1260,there is ample evidence that the drama was not unknown,for within the law is a section which, in forbidding the clergy to play juegos de escarnios,employs the following language:

"The clergy shall perform no farces which

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"The clergy shall perform no farces which

the people are to come and see played; and if other persons perform such pieces, the priests shall not be present, because in them occurs much that is ugly and improper. Then, too, these things must not be performed in the churches; on the contrary, we command that those who do things of this sort be driven out of the churches in disgrace; for the church of God exists for prayer and not for the performing of farces.... Yet there are performances which are permitted to the clergy, as, for example, that of the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, in which it is shown how the angel came to the shepherds and how he said to them: "Jesus Christ is born": and again that of the Epiphany, and how the three Magi came to adore Him; and that of His Resurrection, which shows how he was crucified and rose again on the third day. Such things as these, which encourage men to do good and to have reverence for faith they may perform, for the additional reason that men may remember that it all really happened as it does here. But they must do it in an orderly way and with great devotion, and in large cities where there are Archbishops or Bishops, and at the behest of these or their representatives;

"Siete Partidas"

> but not in villages or in evil places
> or for money-making purposes." Ford:
> Main Currents of Spanish Literature.
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A conclusion we might draw from this law is that plays, both religious and profane, were being given within and without the church, and that excesses led to the restrictions which the law imposed. The clergy performed the pieces given at church festivals, and lay actors performed the unedifying farces.

"La Celestina"

An important influence on the drama, although itself not a drama, was "La Celestina" published in 1492. This was a novel in dialogue which was never acted because it was so lacking in adaptability to stage effects that it would have been quite impossible of presentation. It is supposedly the work of two men, Rodrigo Cota for the first act, and Fernando de Rojas for the nineteen others. Although there are similarities in style and language between the two parts it is generally conceded that Rojas completed the piece after the death of Cota. A distinctive claim of this novel to enduring fame is that it is without doubt the first Spanish literary creation to employ for its characters men and women of flesh and blood instead of allegorical personages.

The first act, which is much the longest of all, opens with a meeting between Calisto, the hero, and Melibea, the heroine. Calisto, in pursuit of a bird, wanders into

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the lady's garden and immediately falls in love with her. She resents such an outburst from one whom she has never seen before, and sends Calisto away full of mortification and despair. Nothing daunted, our hero tells his troubles to the sorceress, Celestina, who, in giving him assurance concerning Melibea, obtains absolute control over him.

Nothing is beyond the reach of the unprincipled Celestina. She talks like a saint, at times like a philosopher; she flatters, she threatens, and she overawes. She obtains access to Melibea, and gains from her a confession of love for Calisto, who then takes things into his own hands and visits Melibea frequently in her garden under cover of darkness.

Summary of the Plot

However, things were destined not to prosper so well. When Celestina has been paid for her services, her assistants begin to quarrel as to what is due them for their share in the love negotiations. Finally these accomplices murder Celestina, then seek Calisto as the indirect cause of the murder. They kill Calisto, and Melibea casts herself headlong from a high tower. The piece ends with the broken-hearted father gazing sadly at the body of Melibea.

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"La Celestina" has greater literary merit than anything produced in all Europe up to this time. It is full of life and movement, and there is great skill

shown in delineation of character. With all these good qualities,however,the piece has much that is indecent in language and suggestion. The surprising fact that the clergy did not try to surpress it is accounted for in that it claimed to be written as a warning to youths against those very seductions and crimes which it unveiled. It ran its course of popular favor unchecked, and the many editions were dedicated not only to ecclesiastics but alike to ladies of rank and modesty. Although "La Celestina" produced no immediate effect on the rude beginnings of the Spanish drama, it was, in time, very influential on the national drama.

After Alfonso X expelled from the Church the juegos de escarnios they took possession of the public squares and attained free development. They were no longer travesties of dogma, but developed into a drama whose movement was independent of the liturgy and whose actors were borrowed from real life in Spanish society. This theatre began towards the close of the fifteenth century with the pastoral pieces of Juan de la Encina.

The Great Encina

Encina is considered to be the true founder of the secular theatre in Spain. In his "Representaciones" he has several elements of proper secular drama, such as singing,dancing and verse,whose origin can be traced no farther back. His pastoral pieces, which he calls eclogues, are eclogues only in name. The substance and

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spirit of them are very different from the Latin eclogues which were Encina's models.

There are two important considerations which point to Encina as the founder of the secular theatre. The first of these, the fact that there is in existence no authentic monument of the Spanish drama prior to him, we may pass over. But the other consideration, the evidence that his plays were really acted, places him high above anyone who might have come before him. The latest collection of his works contains only eleven plays, six of these being of a religious character. They are dialogues of the simplest kind, presented at Christmas, Easter and during Lent, all being enacted in the chapel of the Duke of Alva, who was the patron of Encina. The five other plays are of secular character, with shepherds and students as the interlocutors. These latter look forward towards the coming secular drama, while the six religious plays rather look backward towards the old religious exhibitions of the country.

Type of the Encina Play

None of the plays contains much dramatic merit; on the contrary, they are rather rude and slight. The "Representation for Good Friday" is similar to his other religious plays and serves as a specimen of them. This play opens with two hermits discussing the death of the Saviour, which occurred that day. While they are grieving over His crucifixion, St.Veronica comes to them,

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tells them of the Lord's sweat of agony, and shows them the napkin on which is the impression of the Saviour's face. She joins them on their trip to the sepulcher, where all kneel, and an angel who is there explains to them the mystery of the Saviour's death. After this they sing a villancico, praising God and taking comfort in the promise of the Resurrection.

This play is entirely religious, but two at least of the plays produced in the Duke of Alva's chapel are religious neither in tone nor character. In them Encina elaborates the liturgical drama to a point which Alfonso X would probably have barred from the Church in the thirteenth century. These plays introduce the movement which culminated in the autos of Calderon.

Encina is spoken of as the founder not only of the Spanish secular theatre but of the Portuguese theatre as well. Recalling the fact that all of his work is done in Spanish this appellation may seem strange, but it is a fact that the first great Portuguese writer, Gil Vicente, was a faithful follower of Encina and introduced much of his work into Portugal. Although he copied profusely from Encina he advanced beyond his model in the lyrical quality which he introduced into his dramas.

Vicente's Influence

Vicente's plays are all either short, lively dramas or religious pastorals, and of the forty-two still existing ten are in Castillian, fifteen partly so, and only seventeen in Portuguese. His "Auto da Sibilla Cassandra",

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which was written in Portuguese, is a characteristic play and full of inventiveness. It is written to be enacted on Christmas morning in the old monastery of Enxobregas before the Queen Mother. The heroine, Cassandra, a young lady devoted to pastoral life, has resolved never to marry. Hardly has she made this resolution when King Solomon comes with a proffer of marriage to her. She refuses him, and is then surrounded by her three aunts and as many uncles who try to make her change her mind. She persists in her determination, however, until her uncles madly sing;

"She is wild! She is wild!
Who shall speak to the child?
On the hills pass her hours,
As a shepherdess free;
She is fair as the flowers,
She is wild as the sea!
She is wild! She is wild!
Who shall speak to the child?" Ticknor: History of Spanish Literature. vol.I, chap. XIV.

Cassandra then tells her uncles that she has received warning that the Saviour is to be born of a virgin that day and that she hopes to be the mother. The uncles are shocked at this, and think all the more that she is crazy. Immediately, however, a curtain is drawn aside and the Saviour is disclosed in the manger

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of Bethlehem. This strange play ends with devotions and songs sung to the Madonna.

"The maid is gracious all and fair;
How beautiful beyond compare!"

Performances such as this were given in cathedrals and monasteries, and were a source of edification to the religious people who listened to them. Nearly all of Vicente's plays are poetic and contain elements of the coming drama. In his autos he goes far beyond Encina and introduces effects which Lope de Vega and Calderon indubitably copied.

New Types of Religious Drama

Before the time of Encina and Vicente all plays dealt with religious motives, and the word auto was applied to all. But as the field covered by the drama became enlarged, and secular as well as religious subjects were used in the pieces, the autos became limited in scope and referred merely to plays distinctly religious in type. Examples of these are the "Auto da Fe" and "Auto da Sibilla Cassandra" of Gil Vicente. By the seventeenth century the scope of the drama had become so very large that the religious pieces were divided into two kinds, the "comedias de santos" and the "autos sacramentales".

These autos sacramentales were court representations of a special nature, given once a year at the Feast of Corpus Christi, in honor of the mystery of

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Type of religious drama

the Eucharist. They were sometimes given on a stage drawn by mules in the line of procession, or sometimes on a stage erected at a crossway where the procession would stop. Allegorical persons, enough like the ancient moralites so that the crowd would recognize their traditional costume, treated of theological questions. These were often arduous discussions. Thought conversed with Idolatry and Death, Truth clothed in white and Justice in blue disputed with Desire,in green, the color of Hope. Their differences were settled by the Eternal Word, clothed in fiery red, the symbol of the Incarnation.

Great Outdoor Autos

During the time of Lope de Vega and Calderon the theatres were closed to all other performances than the autos sacramentales for a month of each year, and for this period dramatized expositions of the mystery of the Blessed Eucharist were played in the open.

These autos were given as part of the religious ceremonies, but we should now consider them very gross and irreverent. Their presentation, of which we have a modern adaptation in Alphonse Daudet's "Tartarin de Tarascon", was preceded by an elaborate procession through the streets First came the Tarasca,a horribly misshapen monster,half man and half serpent,who sent fear into the hearts of the ignorant people. This frightful creature was followed by children dressed in gala costumes,and following them came men and women dancing and singing on their way. Next came two "Gigantones",huge giants generally constructed of paste-board,who performed many amusing antics for the

the Eucharist. They were sometimes given on a stage drawn by mules in the line of procession, or sometimes on a stage erected at a crossway where the procession would stop. Allegorical persons, enough like the ancient moralites so that the crowd would recognize their traditional costume, treated of theological questions. These were often arduous discussions. Thought conversed with Idolatry and Death, Truth clothed in white and Justice in blue disputed with Desire, in green, the color of Hope. Their differences were settled by the Eternal Word, clothed in fiery red, the symbol of the Incarnation.

During the time of Lope de Vega and Calderon the theatres were closed to all other performances than the autos sacramentales for a month of each year, and for this period dramatized expositions of the mystery of the Blessed Eucharist were played in the open.

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crowds watching along the streets. Following the "Gigantones" came the priests in solemn parade, carrying the Host under a beautiful canopy. Then came the procession of devout citizens, all carrying torches, though it was daylight. If this procession were in Madrid it was composed of such important people as the King, the foreign ambassadors and the officers of State. In the towns and provinces the alcalde of the village was one of the torch-carriers. At the end of the procession were cars carrying actors from the theatres who had, probably through compulsion, given up a month of their time to performing for the Church.

When the procession arrived at some central place in the city or village it stopped while the priests performed religious service. At this service all knelt down as if in church, and remained kneeling until the priests had finished. After these ceremonies the actors were ready with their performance on an improvised stage.

Influence of Lope De Vega

Early in the sixteenth century these performances consisted merely of the auto, itself, followed by rustic dancing and singing. But in the seventeenth century they were greatly elaborated by Lope de Vega, and reached the height of their success with Calderon about 1650. At that time the auto sacramental was composed of three parts: the loa or prologue, the entremes and the auto itself.

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the irreverent character of these prologues we may take one of Lope de Vega's:a peasant has come to the city for the festivities and has lost his wife in the crowd. He has just about given up the search for her and is happily going to find another wife when the lost one appears. She tells him of the wonderful procession she has seen, the same that the audience has just witnessed, and speaks of the feast which is being celebrated. This last is done to introduce the subject of the auto.

The entremes is then recited. This, in most of Lope de Vega's autos, is secular rather than religious. It is generally a satire on a lawyer, a poet, or a public official, and is of a jesting rather than a serious nature. After the presentation of these light pieces, during which the Gigantones had been helping to make the audience merry, the serious and supposedly religious piece appeared. One of the most solemn of Lope de Vega's autos is "The Harvest", which was based on the parable of St. Matthew, of the Field which was sown with Good Seed and with Tares. The Tares, in this case, represented Judaism, Idolatry, Heresy, and all Sectarianism, which had great difficulty in being saved even by conversion.

At the end of the performance each day there were music and dancing to assist in amusing the masses. This was repeated every day for a month in different parts of the city, and although there was much buffoonery and apparently irreverent matter in the autos, the people profited by them and were better in their religion for having seen them.

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Autos of Calderon

Especially was this true of the autos of Calderon. He presented the allegorical personages with such force that instead of appearing to be allegorical they seemed to be real people who brought their lessons home to the crowds. Calderon had such a great variety of subjects, and evidently used such costly and extravagant machinery in his autos, that they must have been elaborate exhibitions. Also the fact that they were represented in seasons of solemn leisure, at the expense of the Government, and with the sanction of the Church, gave them claims on the popular favor which were enjoyed by no other form of popular amusement.

Calderon used such allegorical personages as Sin, Death, Mohammedanism, Judaism, Justice, Mercy and Charity. These appeared in "The First Flower of Carmel", "Ruth's Gleaning", "God's Vineyard" and "The Divine Orpheus", which latter is characteristic of its author in its poetical merit as in its other qualities. One of the most interesting of his autos sacramentales is the "Encantos de la Culpa". In this "Man is represented as sailing over the world's wide sea in a bark manned by the five Senses and piloted by Understanding. Escaping from the perils of a great storm they all land. The Senses go forth to explore the region, and Man, deprived of his active forces, sinks into slumber. The Senses fall under the thrall of the enchantress, Sin, who, a Circe, converts them into brutes. When Man awakes from a troubled dream, Understanding

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acquaints him with the fate of his guides through life, the Senses, and urges him to repentance, that they may be regenerated". Ford: Main Currents of Spanish Literature. Chap. V, pp. 162-163. Man, however, becomes affected by the sorceries of Sin, and in the midst of his sinful delights Penance calls to him,

"Oh, forget that thou dost live!"

and Understanding, also:

"And remember thou must die!"

Eventually Understanding and Penance prevail over Sin, and Man is fortified by the Holy Eucharist. He then sails away again with Understanding at the helm and the Senses at their duty.

The effect of having a vessel draw up to the stage, and of having the actors pass from the vessel to the stage, and back again, was very striking; and sometimes these vessels were the most important things in the performance, being sent away on life's journey midst the cheers of the actors on the stage and the enthusiastic audience to whom the whole performance had seemed so real. These performances were a remarkable exhibition of the spirit of the Catholic Religion, and they produced a devout effect on the multitudes.

Suppression of Autos

The genuine inspiration from the autos ended with Calderon, but they remained on the stage until 1765 when they were, with difficulty, suppressed by Charles III. However, they had become so popular and represented so

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well the feelings of the people, that the decree of Charles could not entirely efface them, and we hear, even now, of autos being played in some of the remote villages of Spain and in some of her dependencies.

The other form of the drama in Spain, the comedia de santos, or comedia divina, differed from the auto sacramental in that there was no liturgical element in it. The subject only was religious, frequently being derived from the biography of a saint. These religious dramas were divided into jornadas, or days, as Torres Naharro termed the scenes, and were represented at any time of the year in the ordinary playhouses before a paying public. Of these dramas one group can be put aside:- the bible pieces, where the saintly history is more or less habitually cut up into scenes, with disdain of exactness and truth. Without these there still remain over 1000 comedias divinas.

No country has ever had so prolific a development of masterpieces along this line. Princes of the House of Austria were illustrious at this time for their religious fervor. To Charles V, Philip II, Philip III and Philip IV religion was not only an instrument of salvation, but also a singularly strong way of establishing their authority and of breaking the last resistance of the provincial spirit. Ferdinand and Isabella had, by

resorting to the Inquisition, brought about the establishment of religious unity and obedience and of absolute political unity. In the presence of growing reform Spain posed as the champion of orthodoxy.

Drama the Handmaid of Dogma

The unreserved religious faith and blind patriotism of the people needed some medium for expressing all their memories, all their passions and all their aspirations. This medium they found in the stage, which was accessible to the most illiterate. In the playhouses gentlemen disputed for the first row of seats, ladies stifled in the scorching boxes, and the noisy crowd of muleteers was crushed into the pit. Everybody went, because both their desire for spectacles and their religious fervor were satisfied. The Spanish public had a marked predilection for a form of art which satisfied the taste for a spectacle and at the same time contributed to religious edification. It must not be lost sight of that Spanish drama developed in a time of tremendous religious enthusiasm. The people then had an equal ardor for the Catholic faith and national pride.

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brated writers, Alarcon, Rojas, Solis, Calderon, Espinel and Moreto were priests.

The material which these authors drew from was of infinite richness: local traditions, ancient Spanish and Portuguese chronicles, and large collections of one kind or another offered a wide variety of subjects. Every marvellous thing which had ever swelled the imagination of a crowd was found condensed into these compilations.

Brutal Realism Demanded

At first the reshaping of this material into a play was simplified beyond measure. All the interest was in the situation, in a succession of tableaux; the characters were developed but slightly, and painted with no shades or traits. The people wanted brutal realism. In their character was still enough barbarity to find pleasure in horrible details and bloody spectacles. The ancient theatre had these traits, but only as exceptions; they abound in the Spanish drama. To paraphrase Ticknor, it could not be otherwise in a country where strong emotions could be born only through images of physical grief, where the soul was always less touched by the thought of the Divine Sacrifice than by the sight of a panting Christ, convulsed, splashed by bloody spots, offering between the black arms of the cross the sight of veritable agony.

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was a childishness of mind which led to the writing of ridiculous accounts of miracles. Characteristic also of the religious drama was the importance of making the spectacle a rich one. Spanish machinists could do more than make the dead speak, statues come to life, angels, spectres and demons appear. For example, in "San Nicolas", by Lope,

Rich Spectacles

> "one sees the sky open, and God seated between Justice and Pity, with Our Lady, and St.Augustine flying to meet her. In another play one sees a tempest at sea, the tumbling down of a temple and a lioness suckling a little child."
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> Reynier: Revue de Paris. 4/15/00. p.832.

There are hundreds of other works whose actions seem to have been imagined only under the pretext of some ingenious artifice. Even when drama began its decadence, it continued its sumptuous figurations, for the pleasure of a beautiful spectacle seemed the only thing the Spanish people could not give up.

In all the dramas,nevertheless, beneath the extreme elaboration, there appears the religious sentiment which dominated the soul. Early in the development of the drama each village had a special saint, or some holy image whose origin was considered marvellous, and accordingly vast numbers of pieces were written in its honor.

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Rich spectacles

Then, too, the monastic orders had saints of prestige, and in both the provinces and the monasteries there was rivalry of local cults. Even in the smallest hamlets theological discussions had their echo in the religious drama. There were great celebrations when some Dominicans were burned for declaring that Mary appeared to a poor tailor and said that she was not immaculately conceived. Lope de Vega wrote a play about it, which is mediocre, but shows sincerity of passion. Every man declared himself the champion of Mary.

Jesuits Make Religion Easy

The Jesuits did much to make religion easy. The middle ages were filled with the idea that if some religious practices were carefully observed always, at judgment day sins would be taken away and virtues supplied. If a bad man said the rosary every day he would be saved at death. There are many examples where the mantle of the Virgin intervened in favor of an infidel. The Spanish Catholic has an ardent love for her and she becomes the object of an almost superstitious devotion.

There was the story of a bad man who could only say, "Hail, Mary, full of grace". He tried to enter a monastery and succeeded with just this knowledge. When he died, not long after, a tree grew on his grave, having on each leaf, in letters of gold, "Hail, Mary, full

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of grace," and upon investigation the roots of this remarkable tree were found to be in the mouth of the man.

These prayers and litanies, which the popular religion represented as a certain security of redemption, the sacred theatre celebrated ceaselessly. A nun runs away with a man, but she has always prayed to the Blessed Virgin, who now rewards her by putting some one in the nun's place until she returns, and no one knows that she has gone. The Cross is adored as a sort of divinity; it is not solely the symbol of divine sacrifice. "La Devocion de la Cruz" by Calderon, which was popular with Protestants as well as with Catholics, had for its hero a man who, though his life was a tissue of crimes, was yet made an object of the especial favor of God because he showed a uniform external reverence for whatever had the form of a cross; and, dying in a ruffian brawl, as a robber, was yet, in consequence of this devotion to the cross, miraculously restored to life that he might confess his sins, be absolved, and then be transported directly to heaven.

A Fantastic Plot

The Spanish theatre is still dominated by another idea: that celestial forgiveness is infinite, that one minute of sincere repentance can efface all the sins of a life time. The idea of the redemption is pushed to

the last limits. Heroes are always men who have been great criminals, very much exaggerated in order that their conversions may be more astonishing.

Not always did the theatre regard ethics in the modern light. For example, if one were to deal with a miscreant, it was his duty to be perfidious and ferocious. In real life great brutality was then used against Protestants. When San Diego d'Alcala, whose virtues Lope has celebrated, went to convert the inhabitants of the Iles Fortunees, he saw some natives in pagan dress and had his soldiers massacre all the idolaters. Another popular hero, the Vaillant Cespedes, met a great Protestant noble in the palace of Charles XV and without any explanation gave him such a blow that he knocked out three teeth. Because of the political state of affairs the Emperor blamed him publicly, but privately said he had never had an action please him more.

Morality Sacrificed to Faith

On the whole the Spanish religious drama sacrifices morality to faith. This form of drama was followed by the public with a passionate interest. It was not rare to have a person be converted as a result of seeing or acting one of these pieces, and leave the world for a monastery. Neither the grosser entremeses which were represented between the acts, nor the indecent dances which accompanied them, could weaken the

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strong impressions which the crowd carried away from these pious spectacles.

On the other hand, this religious theatre was profoundly Spanish in its absolute respect for all authority and particularly for monastic orders, and in its sensual mysticism which sometimes made the delirium of devotion seem like the ardor of profane love, and finally in an extremely marked taste for theological discussions.

The most significant trait is the evident resolution to eliminate all that tends to make religious sentiment vague and indistinct, in order to affirm in every way the fundamental points of a dogma under their most precise forms. Pious heroes of Lope, Tirso and Calderon make in four hundred different verses an exposition of the Catholic faith. They defend their belief by ardor and protestation, but, point by point, they justify the doctrine by reasons, remembering the long and subtle arguments of Original Sin, Redemption and Divinity.

Arguments of Pious Heroes

Various singular abuses of theology are explained, doubtless, by the necessity which the Church felt of maintaining the integrity of its dogma.

We have seen that for centuries the dramatic representations were in the hands of the Church, so that formidable difficulties presented themselves to those

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who tried to withdraw from its influence. From 1520 to 1573 the representation of dramas was forbidden by edict. In the reign of Charles V nearly all except those on strictly religious subjects, were laid under the ban of the Church. This did not help to develop the drama, and as time goes on one finds that the progression is away from religious elements. About 1536 the plays were a wild mixture of the spirit of the old mysteries, in order to conciliate the Church, and comic elements to amuse an audience that had little sympathy with monks and hermits.

The National Drama Evolved

The attempts to form and develop a national drama were few. From the first attempt about 1250, to 1568, when a compromise between the Church and the Theatre was begun, very little was undertaken. The Church had so profoundly established a deep sentiment of devotion in the literature that the final demand for a national drama, to be founded not on religious elements, but on national character and manners, remained ungratified until the time of the great Lope de Vega and Calderon.

Spanish history abounds in evidence that the drama served for these several centuries as a useful instrument of the Church. In a sense the old playwrights were missionaries. In the absence of

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